

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SOURCE:

1. At the beginning of 1952 the Hungarian Workers' Party ordered trade union elections in order to carry out a purge of the personnel of the National Trade Union Council (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa - SZOT) and some Trade Union Committees in individual enterprises.
2. Elections for trade union functionaries in the Foundries and Machine Industries Ministry followed the procedure adopted for preparing for elections for basic organ secretaries in all trade unions in Hungary. Following the Party Committee instructions, the Ministry's Trade Union Committee called together the trade union "great active" (nagyaktiva). This "great active" consisted of all the deputies or secretaries of the basic trade union organs, deputies for work competitions, social-political affairs trustees, and trade union departmental administrators. Several outstanding Party members were also present. At this meeting the secretary of the Trade Union Committee in the Ministry, Mrs. (fnu) GOEMBOECZ, who was 40 years old, dark haired, of medium height, and weighed at least 200 pounds, announced to the "actives" that it was necessary to call membership meetings in the basic trade union organs to discuss the elections. The calling up of the "great active" was purely a formality, because the deputies in the basic organs had already received their instruction from the Ministry's Trade Union Committee at a smaller preliminary meeting. The Party had carefully examined beforehand the biographical data of candidates for trade union functionaries to prevent the candidacy of anyone who had belonged at some time to the Social Democratic Party. Trade union basic organ deputies who fell into this category were informed privately that the Ministry's Party Committee would entrust them with a different kind of Party work and that therefore they should not be candidates again in the forthcoming elections.

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3. After the meeting of the "great active", agitation among members of the candidacy committee appointed by the Trade Union Committee followed this line. For example, "Comrade, what do you think of Comrade (fnu) MISZNYAK? I believe that he would do his work well as basic organ secretary. I hope you agree with me and will vote for him. You know, the trade union has elected you a member of the candidacy committee." (Comrade MISZNYAK was a dark, tall, heavy-set, round-faced man who was secretary of the basic organ in the Iron Metallurgy Division). If this member of the candidacy committee did not agree with the agitator, he was simply replaced by another person. "Actives" also carried out Party instructions by telling a member of the candidacy committee that a given person could not be a candidate for election because he had been assigned a different kind of Party work.
4. When the time came for the actual elections, the Trade Union Committee took their seats on a platform facing the members. The trade union secretary still in office reported on the activities in the preceeding month and the results. She enumerated all the changes in the basic organs during her term in office, the status of work competitions, activities of the executive committees of the basic organs, but above all she presented a self criticism. After speeches on the subjects mentioned and discussion by the members, the trade union secretary announced, as the second item on the agenda, election of the new Trade Union Committee. The membership was by that time tired and numb, and eager to go home. In the name of the old Committee she nominated a delegation of the candidacy committee to nominate the new Trade Union Committee. These delegates had been instructed in advance. The secretary asked the delegates to move to another room, and there the nominations were made in a few minutes, since every delegate knew what would happen to him if he did not agree. The delegates returned half an hour later, for the sake of form. The secretary read the list of candidates. Members could ask the candidates pertinent questions, and then voting began for each candidate. Members at these elections were disinterested and bored. The entire meeting proceeded mechanically.
5. After the election, the retiring Trade Union Committee gave place to the newly elected Committee on the platform. The old Committee greeted the new and took leave of the members, while the new Committee greeted the members. Various offices were distributed among the Committee members on instructions from above without consultation with the membership. The new Trade Union Committee usually contained two or three re-elected old members. One of the members of the new Committee thanked the membership for confidence and announced that the new Committee would present its work plan at the next month's Trade Union Day meeting. It was also announced that on the same occasion election of delegates would be held to represent the basic trade union organs on higher trade union committees.
6. Since the membership elected leaders indirectly from basic organs to SZOT, there could be no subsequent dispute of decisions made by SZOT. The candidacy committees and elections of deputies were carried out merely to give the procedure a democratic coloring.

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